



*CAB Corner on Quality*  
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## **What we don't know *can* hurt us**

*By Steve Ringle, CAB Assistant Director of Brand Assurance*

What's in a name? Not much, in my line of work, unless it's followed by an "R" in a circle, as in ®. If this symbol is used with a name, it should command respect. It screams, "If you abuse me, I can legally kick your butt!" We have a word for these respected names: trademarks.

Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) doesn't own any cattle or beef products, but we do own a nice set of trademarks. You may use words like brand, trade-name, logo, symbol or label, so long as we all understand we are talking about the same thing. One of the most famous, and most abused, trademarks that we own is the three-word phrase, *Certified Angus Beef*®.

We pay attention to how this trademark is used for several reasons. We want to ensure that anyone using it has a license to do so; that levels the playing field for all our licensed partners. We also want to ensure that the trademark is used correctly and for the appropriate items.

That's critically important, not only for our company, but for all Angus producers and for our licensed packers, processors, distributors, retailers and restaurants. We must collect information on our trademark use in every marketplace where *Certified Angus Beef*® products are sold.

We go about this mostly from a consumer point of view. Think about where you'd expect to see a food brand displayed and you begin to narrow the search to two main industries: restaurants and retailers.

Monitoring retailers for the use of our trademarks is pretty simple. Most of them offer their weekly circulars on their Web sites, so we can tell pretty quickly if our licensed retailers are using the trademarks correctly. These partners have also served as good "eyes and ears" for us in their respective markets. They alert us of any non-licensed use of our trademarks, and we follow up quickly.

Most of our compliance effort focuses on the restaurant industry. Would we like to see menus? Absolutely. In fact, we put a lot of thought and effort into collecting them. We partner with our licensed foodservice distributors to get their customers' menus.

We offer a list of menus, by market, so our traveling staff can collect them. We have even conducted phonethons internally, to simply call restaurants and ask for their menus. All told, we will collect more than 4,500 menus this year, screening each and taking corrective action where needed.

Why do we go to all that trouble? Because, what we don't know CAN hurt us. The *Certified Angus Beef*<sup>®</sup> brand stands for quality. It is a recognized and respected trademark, 30 years in the making. The brand climbed to the top largely because we rode herd on the strays. At first, people would put the words in the wrong order or fail to capitalize or add another word to the phrase.

A bigger issue today is illegal imitation. Because consumers recognize this mark of quality, we unfortunately find that companies like to use our brand name although they have no license and often have no product. Unless we know this is happening, we cannot do much about it. Armed with the facts, however, we can work to resolve the issues so your *Certified Angus Beef*<sup>®</sup> brand continues to have value and relevance in the marketplace.

If you would like to ride for the brand, if you want to help our effort, email us at [info@certifiedangusbeef.com](mailto:info@certifiedangusbeef.com) or give us a call at 330-345-2333. We would be happy to provide you with a list of menus that we need from your marketplace, or an area where you plan to travel. If you can collect 10 menus on the list, we will even make you a member of the elite CAB S.W.A.T. team. I'd tell you what it's all about, but it is classified. Just trust me, you want a piece of that action.

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